



USS Virginia.

U.S. Navy

By JAMES J. TRITTEN

Following their victories in the Spanish-American War, Admirals William T. Sampson and Winfield Scott Schley engaged in a lively public debate over their respective records at the Battle of Santiago in July 1898. The Spanish admiral, Pascual Cervera, outmaneuvered the North Atlantic Squadron and managed to enter the Cuban harbor at Santiago where he maintained a fleet-in-being. After several failed attempts, a combination of joint actions ashore and at sea lured the Spanish fleet out of the harbor. Cervera was defeated in the ensuing battle.

The argument over how the battle should have been fought lasted for years; a Presidential order was needed to stop the debate. The acrimonious enquiry into tactics and doctrine following the Spanish-American War deterred

frank and open discussion of doctrine in the Navy for years. One might conclude that the Sampson-Schley debate virtually banished the term *doctrine* from the naval lexicon, inhibiting a generation of officers from exploring the nature and content of doctrine.

Lieutenant Commander Dudley W. Knox wrote a prize-winning essay in 1915, published in the *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, that attempted to revive doctrine as an issue. While Knox failed to bring doctrinal debate to the fore, doctrine was no longer a forbidden subject. It appeared in tactical publications whose readership was almost exclusively Navy officers. It also took root in the unwritten but extremely powerful form of shared experiences derived from service at sea, fleet exercises, and war college courses. Doctrinal debate resumed in wardrooms and classrooms rather than in professional journals.

By World War II there was a mature, formal, and centralized system for developing and evaluating doctrine in the Navy, one that guided rather than directed the fleet commander on how to fight. While conventional wisdom says that the Navy has never had a centralized military doctrine, the U.S. fleet in World War II operated under a series of hierarchical doctrinal publications. At the top was *War Instructions: United States Navy*, F.T.P. 143 and F.T.P. 143 (A), which was issued by Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, and published in 1934, then revised and republished in 1944. The first stressed joint operations and the wartime version led off with a chapter on the importance of combat leadership competencies.

Underneath that publication was *General Tactical Instructions*, F.T.P. 142, issued by the Chief of Naval Operations in 1934. Next in the hierarchy was Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, *Current Tactical Orders and Doctrine*, 1941, U.S.F. 10. The Pacific Fleet created its doctrine once the experience of the war had been internalized: Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific

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Fleet, *Current Tactical Orders and Doctrine U.S. Pacific Fleet*, PAC-10, published in 1943. There were also type doctrines and tactical orders prepared for each class of ship. Fleet and multinational doctrine also existed in the Atlantic Fleet where *Atlantic Convoy Instructions* published by the Royal Navy was accepted as doctrine. Despite some claims, written Navy doctrine did not detract from operations at sea during

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the war, nor did operations suffer from a lack of written doctrine. Recently, Naval Warfare Publication (NWP) 1, *Strategic Concepts of the U.S. Navy*, continued the evolution of the Navy's doctrinal thinking.

The following look at the evolving Navy attitude toward doctrine provides a framework for understanding the service's current perception of doctrine, and examines the important differences between single-service Navy doctrine and multiservice naval doctrine. It also analyzes the lessons learned from historical research of doctrine in navies, concluding that the Navy is fully engaged in the doctrine-development process and is contributing to multiservice, joint, and combined doctrine, strategy, and operations.

Changing Perspectives

Naval doctrine has existed in various forms since World War II, some more obvious than others. Written doctrine addressed naval (that is, Navy and Marine Corps) concepts of both joint and combined doctrine as well as that which is service-specific. Doctrine for amphibious warfare also appeared in service-specific naval warfare publications, tactical notes, and memos. And the Navy recognized that the bulk of its doctrine existed in the unwritten shared experiences of its officers. But as one observer recently noted, it was time for the Navy to take stock of its concept of doctrine development and the status of doctrine in the naval services. Establishing a connection between the Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Gulf War, the Navy faced a potential gap in warfighting concepts.

Doctrine need not be written to be effective. Unwritten customary naval doctrine has long existed in the form of the commander's intent, as well as in the cumulative experience of admirals and commanders. There is a long history of informal beliefs of the officer corps as Navy doctrine; doctrine may even have been more powerful in that form than in the official written versions which coexisted. The symmetry between doctrine and international law is noteworthy. Informal doctrine is to law based on custom as formal doctrine is to treaties. While both forms of the law are equally valid, treaties are far easier to change.

As they examined the nature of change and continuity in the early 1990s, the Armed Forces described their vision of the future. The Navy's white paper entitled . . . *From the Sea* directed the naval services away from open-ocean maritime strategy toward naval expeditionary forces for joint and combined operations in the littoral. It also announced the establishment of the Naval Doctrine Command (NDC) which opened in March 1993 under the supervision of both the Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps. It was designated the focus for developing doctrine to sustain the strategic concepts outlined in . . . *From the Sea* and subsequent documents. Publication in 1994 of *Forward . . . From the Sea* reaffirmed the tenets of the original white paper and made modest enhancements in some areas.

NDC is charged with developing multiservice naval concepts, integrated multiservice naval doctrine, and Navy service-unique doctrine. Its missions include providing a coordinated Navy and Marine Corps position in joint and combined doctrine development and ensuring that naval and joint doctrine are addressed in training and education, and in operations, exercises, and wargames. Priority is given to doctrine that addresses the new geo-strategic environment and a changing threat and efforts that enhance integrating

naval forces in joint and combined operations. The center has recently published *Naval Warfare*, the capstone doctrine manual for the naval service.

As a capstone document, *Naval Warfare* forms the bridge between the naval component of military strategy and naval tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP). *Naval Warfare* addresses the employment of naval forces as well as levels and principles of war. It forms the framework for subsequent development and refinement of naval doctrine. *Naval Warfare* is the first step toward common understanding of the precepts and procedures of naval warfighting.

While NDC is the first multiservice naval doctrine command, it is not the first command to write naval doctrine. The doctrine division of the Marine Corps Combat Development Center has been in operation for several years, and naval contribution to joint doctrine is well established. In earlier times, doctrine was prepared by major naval commands and by Washington headquarters.

An example of how the Navy is adapting existing naval doctrine can be seen in its response to maneuver warfare, a concept that was articulated clearly by the Marines in 1989. Maneuver warfare has been espoused by the Navy in *Naval Warfare*, and NDC will soon publish the concept of maneuver warfare at sea. This action parallels recent Air Force investigation of maneuver warfare and Army adoption of some of its tenets. It remains to be seen whether maneuver warfare eventually becomes joint doctrine if it is adopted by all four services.

A Formal Approach

Like other professions, the military of many nations have historically relied upon a system of knowledge and beliefs to define their job. But unlike medical practice, military doctrine varies substantially among nations in much the same manner that doctrine differs among the military arms and services of a nation. Sometimes doctrine has been written and centralized and sometimes it has been unwritten and decentralized, especially in navies. All forms of military doctrine, however, have at least two elements in

common: how the profession thinks about warfare and how it acts in combat. Each element is necessary to create

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doctrine; neither is sufficient without the other.

Joint doctrine, which governs the strategic and operational levels of warfare, describes the ways service assets are employed to achieve strategic ends. Joint doctrine is primarily written for CINCs. The services train and equip military forces, but it is the unified CINCs who actually use forces in support of national policy.

The services influence the form and content of emerging joint doctrine in various ways, including comments from each service and the participation of service officers assigned to the Joint Staff and the staffs of CINCs. Service headquarters and service and multiservice doctrine centers and commands influence the process. Though each service plays an important role in drafting joint doctrine, they cannot veto the results. The Chairman is the final arbiter of joint doctrine.

Since the services may need to cooperate outside the approval authority of CJCS, there are provisions for multiservice doctrine to guide the employment of forces of two or more services in coordinated action. Multiservice doctrine is primarily for the strategic or operational levels of war. Much of the thinking behind multiservice doctrine predates Goldwater-Nichols.

Cooperation between the services on multiservice doctrine is exemplified by AirLand Battle doctrine. The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and Air Force Tactical Air Command started the multiservice Air-Land Forces Applications Agency in 1975, which has since become the Air, Land, Sea Application (ALSA) Center. While it may be simply a matter of time before these multiservice organizations are absorbed by a revamped Joint Warfighting Center, there is reason to believe in the longevity of multiservice doctrine. The Navy finds it far

more palatable to develop naval doctrine within the context of the familiar Navy-Marine team than in the new joint environment.

The other services, Joint Staff, and unified CINCs influence the process in a manner that can take control of naval doctrine away from the Navy.

There are various reasons for retaining multiservice doctrine centers. Sponsoring services can retain direct control over the operations of such agencies, generally outside of the formal joint process and without the participation of the Joint Staff or unified commands. Such activities also have the advantage of allowing service coordination, a procedure that can resemble making laws or sausages, at a level that generally does not prejudice either the process or the product.

NDC has given the Navy its first centralized command responsible for publishing doctrine for the fleet. Since it is a multiservice command—naval doctrine publications bear the signatures of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps—some of its products contain multiservice doctrine. The Navy will use the command for Navy doctrine, but the Marine Corps will still utilize its doctrine division at the Marine Corps Combat Development Center.

Multiservice naval doctrine bridges policy, processes that produce strategy, and preparation of information related to TTP. Just as there are some joint TTP, there will be some multiservice naval TTP dealing with the multiservice naval environment. Individual Navy and Marine-specific TTP will be the domain of the respective services. Thus multiservice naval doctrine will primarily be concerned with the operational level of warfare, which influences both the strategic and tactical levels, as is generally the case in the other services.

The compatibility of service and joint doctrine will become an issue in the future. As the services revise doctrine to meet service needs and joint doctrinal guidance, they will be reminded that service doctrine is not supposed to be inconsistent with joint doctrine. For example, some services in

other countries have had difficulty deciding which service doctrine should shape operations when a second service is acting in support. Although a system of joint doctrine should preclude such conflict, it will take time to address and settle the issues that will inevitably appear as joint and service doctrine evolve.

It should be no surprise that doctrine has a vital multinational dimension. Multinational operations, in their varied forms, play an important part as the Armed Forces review and modify doctrine. In responding to crises under the auspices of international organizations, alliances, or ad hoc coalitions, some form of doctrine is needed to ensure common understanding of purpose and actions. The Cold War stimulated such an evolution in NATO, but not easily or quickly. No other international organization has a comparable common understanding of how military professionals think about warfare and how they plan to act in combat. Some form of national military doctrine, including U.S. doctrine, may have to be used as a surrogate in operations outside NATO.

Lessons of History

The single most important lesson to be learned concerning the development of doctrine by world navies is that navy and multiservice naval doctrine has existed under other names throughout history. In addition to written naval doctrine, which goes back at least to the 13th century with the publication of *Título XXIV, De la guerra que se face por la mar* by Rey de Castilla Don Alfonso X el Sabio in 1270 at the Spanish royal court, informal customary doctrine has existed as a shared culture of values and principles in the minds of admirals and commanders in most navies.

There are numerous lessons to be learned from a preliminary review of the history of navy doctrine. First, navies have studied and borrowed doctrine from one another for years—just as we routinely borrow technology. We learned about carriers from the Royal Navy which was to follow American doctrine when its carrier forces were integrated in the Pacific Fleet during

World War II. Second, important doctrinal lessons can be drawn from history, even from the age of sail. Even a cursory study of history reveals that the most vexing doctrinal issues have remarkable durability, regardless of the era or the technology of the fleets:

- What should be the principal form of attack?
- Should escorted ships or their escorts be the object of the attack?
- How much of the attacking force should be held in reserve? What is more important, protecting escorted ships—or an invasion force—or defeating an enemy's offense?
- How should navies fight in the littoral, where most naval warfare has occurred?
- What is the appropriate command and control as naval forces project power ashore?
- How can allies and ad hoc coalition partners be integrated to achieve a single purpose?
- How far should local commanders comply with doctrine issued by bureaucracies?
- How much should commanders rely on enemy intentions as opposed to capabilities?

Such issues have been debated for hundreds of years and illustrate the enduring qualities of questions about how to fight that cross national, geographic, and technology boundaries.

Third, formal navy doctrine suffered a setback with the introduction of new technologies and end of the Anglo-French wars in the age of sail. During those conflicts much naval warfare occurred without significant new technologies to tip the scales. Hence before steam, advances in warfare at sea came via other evolving forms, such as doctrine. Navies debated doctrine and some wrote extensively when technology was static; then as doctrine advanced so did combat potential.

The ironclad forced navies to deal with improvements to naval art and combat potential through technology. Once the wars between Britain and France were over, the assumed adversary changed to other nations or to no specific nation, and the need to refine doctrine was no longer urgent. Little effort was devoted to learning to fight smarter. Perhaps the relative independence of fleets at sea also contributed to the lack of a recent tradition of formal doctrinal development.

Fourth, it is axiomatic that pre-war doctrine cannot foresee all eventualities. No matter how well military doctrine is thought out before a war,

operators at sea and in the field will prevent doctrine from becoming doctrinaire

history demonstrates repeatedly that forces and technology will be used in ways that no one anticipates. The combat leader must not only know service doctrine but when to follow it and when to deviate. Only then will the commander know that deviation has occurred and what that means.

Finally, operators both at sea and in the field must be given the latitude to apply judgment to doctrine. Their input from the fleet and field will prevent doctrine from becoming doctrinaire. Any learning organization must be able to question long-established assumptions, principles, and practices to find and validate new ideas if the organization hopes to remain doctrinally sound.

A foreword to the 1943 edition of *Current Tactical Orders and Doctrine U.S. Pacific Fleet (PAC-10)* stated that the document was “not intended and shall not be construed as depriving any officer exercising tactical command of initiative in issuing special instructions to his command . . . the ultimate aim is to obtain essential uniformity without unacceptable sacrifice of flexibility.” The authors continued, “It is impractical to provide explicit instructions for every possible combination of task force characteristics and tactical situations . . . attacks of opportunity are necessarily limited by the peculiarities of each situation, by the judgment of subordinate commanders, and by the training they have given their personnel. . . . No single rule can be formulated to fit all contingencies.” These are good words to live by.

An Army study of the relationship of combat leaders to battlefield tactical success in Europe during World War II identified one feature common to all divisions ranked among the top ten—the superior quality of the leaders in

each division. Their leaders had a great capacity for independent action and a determined avoidance of fixed patterns. That perception was later updated by a former TRADOC commander who emphasized that Army doctrine is not prescriptive. At the same time, he went no further than to state that current Army doctrine is “as nearly right as it can be.” History supports the view that doctrine should guide rather than direct.

Shifting from open-ocean operations to joint littoral warfare will be as traumatic as moving from battleships to carriers. The challenges in . . . *From the Sea* and the importance of jointness to the Armed Forces represent a significant change. The Navy is documenting current naval doctrine, and in the process adjusting from open-ocean operations to the joint littoral environment. The next step will be to help the fleet internalize the doctrine. Once the Navy has accepted the legitimacy and value of formal written doctrine, it will be time to start developing doctrine for the future as well as the world of programming, that is, acquisition. Those responsible for developing and explaining naval doctrine have avoided the debates over roles, missions, and functions.

Navy doctrine is the art of the admiral; it is not and can never be an exact science. Navy and naval doctrine reflect a common cultural perspective on war and military operations other than war. Doctrine in the Navy and the Marine Corps must be dynamic even as it attempts to identify and preserve that which is enduring in naval experience, traditions, and values.

Formal naval doctrine will shape the judgment of naval leaders at all levels of conflict in the same way that customary traditional doctrine has done for hundreds of years, but it will adapt more readily to change. **JFQ**

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